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## THE UNITED STATES AND PORTO RICO <sup>1</sup>

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**T**HE peoples of the republics of North and South America, notwithstanding the great differences in climate and physical environment which characterize the territory they inhabit, have an essential basis of unity. We assume this much at least in all our discussions of the varied problems of our political relations with one another. It is implied of course in the Monroe Doctrine, whatever scope we give to it. Yet little has been done here or elsewhere to analyze the factors of that unity of purpose, of ideals of institutional life, which we here in the United States assume to be an essential element of every true democracy. We have neglected great opportunities that lie at our door to cultivate international relations, mutual regard and understanding between the republics of the western hemisphere.

It was my privilege and pleasure to serve in the early days of American civil government in Porto Rico as commissioner of education for Porto Rico. I lived there for three years and I came to know the people intimately and to realize something of their ambitions, especially as revealed in their eagerness for educational opportunities. Through those associations and other relations with Central and South America I have come to know also something of the distrust, the suspicion, the antagonism that exists all through Latin America with respect to us here in the United States of America. As has been pointed out by several speakers at this conference we have aroused this feeling of suspicion partly because we have had no settled policy in our political dealings with South America. Naturally, without any defined purpose

<sup>1</sup> Address delivered at the National Conference on Foreign Relations of the United States, held under the auspices of the Academy of Political Science, at Long Beach, N. Y., May 30, 1917.

in playing a dominant rôle in the political development of the western hemisphere, suspicion has been aroused that there may be ulterior motives behind everything we have done.

The closer relationships which we now feel are so desirable must be based, of course, upon a great many different foundations. First, there is the foundation of commercial intercourse, which is perhaps in a fair way to take care of itself. Our business men in America are not so indifferent as they were formerly to the advantages of closer commercial relations. They are not so blind as formerly to the business advantages of transportation facilities and other instrumentalities of trade and exchange between nations, upon which success in commerce is necessarily based. There are also hopeful signs in the direction of intellectual and educational co-operation. Our universities are exchanging professors. Delegations of educators are coming from the various countries of Central and South America from time to time to visit and study our institutions at first hand, and report back to their own countries the results of their observations. We are sending delegations to international congresses, also delegations to visit the various countries of South America to express in this way our interest, and what is even more, to develop in our own people a better knowledge of the aspirations and the civilization of these countries. These are significant signs of a new and better internationalism. There are also not lacking signs of progress in the direction of co-operation in the tasks of government, in international undertakings, in the expression of mutual sympathies, and in concerted action with respect to affairs that concern us all alike. Upon these foundations important developments in the evolution of democracies in the western hemisphere will doubtless take place.

On our part we have failed to give to the peoples of South America any adequate expression of the idealism of the United States, and our people have failed also to understand the idealism of Latin America. Intellectual co-operation and association is the most urgent and pressing need and promises greater results in stable political relations than even the growth of commerce, important as that is. We have had since the es-

tablishment of American government in Porto Rico an exceptional opportunity to develop in that island an experimental station, so to speak, for the cultivation of international relations, co-operation and interpretation of the common ambitions of Latin and Anglo-Saxon Americans. Porto Rico lies at the gateway to the Panama Canal, a gateway through which the commerce of Europe must pass in going through the canal to the Pacific. It is one of the most beautiful semi-tropical islands in the world. There are no flaws upon our title. The people of Porto Rico welcomed our entrance there. Their leaders—and they had leaders, not merely a small group of people who had usurped power, but real leaders of the intellectual life of the island—welcomed our entrance, welcomed our political domination. They saw in our institutions the hope for a great future for their island. We have already done very creditable work in the building up of the foundations of a free, independent government in Porto Rico. We have invited the co-operation of all the native elements in the government. It is a government of the people of Porto Rico. It is true that the governor of the island is not elected by the people but is appointed by the president of the United States. Certain other officers are appointed, but the whole spirit of co-operation has been well exemplified there, and the results have justified our hopes in illustrating what American institutions can do when brought into close relationship with the special problems of Latin American civilization. It is there that we are gradually moulding the local institutions that represent the amalgamation of Anglo-Saxon law and Roman law; it is there that we are gradually building up and strengthening the representative local institutions of government. Progress in municipal government has been the most remarkable part of all the progress that has been made in Porto Rico. It is there too that we are making the greatest progress in education. The population numbers over a million people, eighty-five per cent of whom were illiterates with almost no elementary school system when American government was inaugurated. The financial resources of the island were meagre compared with the needs and costs of government;

and yet there has been built up a substantial elementary-school system, supported out of the revenues of the island. There has been an endeavor to build up higher education, and it is one of the greatest neglects that we have been guilty of that we have not seen the opportunity for a larger and wise investment in that direction. There was established fourteen years ago by act of the insular legislature of Porto Rico the University of Porto Rico, planned on the scale of a great American state university. Provision could be made only for a very meagre beginning in working out that plan. It was hoped by those interested at that time that this enterprise of an American university might appeal to American philanthropists, that there might be established there what is one of the greatest needs of the whole South American continent, a great school of medicine, that could be made the basis for the development of more effective public sanitation and public health work which is so much needed throughout all the countries of Latin America. There is also great need for a school of law, where the legal institutions and the political sciences could be studied and cultivated by the greatest scholars of North and South America coming together in such a school. There is also a great opportunity for a school of agriculture. I might go on indefinitely with all the departments of a real university and show an equal need and opportunity for all, especially for a school of business, a school of liberal arts, and a school of science. As the United States moves out of her provincialism and takes her place in world affairs there is no step at this moment where an expenditure of a hundred million dollars would give a greater return for all future time than in making Porto Rico a model of all that is best in American government, education, sanitation and industrial regulation, and a model experiment station in testing and working out the adaptation of these things to all that is best in the life and institutions of a Latin American population. The United States has given little or no financial aid to Porto Rico and the island thus far has had to pay its own way. An expenditure of twenty-five or fifty million dollars on the educational institutions alone of Porto Rico in a way that would bring together

in that island in intellectual co-operation the leaders of thought and of political life from all the republics of the western hemisphere would be an excellent investment.

It is not until we awake to the opportunities that we have neglected and ignored, and begin to realize that it will pay us to make an investment in cultivating friendly relations and building the foundations of mutual understanding and co-operation between the republics of the western hemisphere, that we as a nation shall really be alive to the great political questions which we are discussing in this conference, especially those that have to do with our policies in the Carribean and in South America. The intellectual as well as the material resources and wealth of the United States must be mobilized and made serviceable for our common needs if we are to bring the Americas together.